



# The Obesity Epidemic and

## United States Students

### What is the problem?

The 2009 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among U.S. high school students:

#### Obesity

- 12% were obese (students who were  $\geq$  95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex, based on reference data).

#### Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors

- 78% ate fruits and vegetables less than five times per day during the 7 days before the survey. (1)
- 66% ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices less than two times per day during the 7 days before the survey.
- 86% ate vegetables less than three times per day during the 7 days before the survey. (2)
- 29% drank a can, bottle, or glass of soda or pop at least one time per day during the 7 days before the survey. (3)

#### Physical Inactivity

- 23% did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on any day during the 7 days before the survey. (4)
- 82% were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on less than 7 days during the 7 days before the survey. (4)
- 44% did not attend physical education (PE) classes in an average week when they were in school.
- 67% did not attend PE classes daily when they were in school.
- 33% watched television 3 or more hours per day on an average school day.
- 25% used computers 3 or more hours per day on an average school day. (5)

### What are the solutions?

Better health education • More PE and physical activity programs  
Healthier school environments • Better nutrition services

### What is the status?

The School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006 indicates that among U.S. high schools:

#### Health Education

- 69% required students to receive instruction on health topics as part of a specific course.
- 53% taught 14 nutrition and dietary behavior topics in a required health education course.
- 38% taught 13 physical activity topics in a required health education course.

#### PE and Physical Activity

- 95% required students to take PE; among these schools 59% did not allow students to be exempted from taking a required PE course for certain reasons. (6)
- 2% required daily PE or its equivalent for students in all grades in the school for the entire year.
- 45% offered opportunities for students to participate in intramural activities or physical activity clubs.

#### School Environment

- In 18%, students could purchase fruits or vegetables. (7)
- In 77%, students could purchase soda pop or fruit drinks that are not 100% juice. (7)
- In 50%, students could purchase chocolate candy. (7)
- 52% did not allow students to purchase foods or beverages high in fat, sodium, or added sugars during school lunch periods.

#### Nutrition Services

- 77% offered a choice between 2 or more different fruits or types of 100% fruit juice each day for lunch.
- 49% did not sell any fried foods as part of school lunch.
- 81% offered lettuce, vegetable, or bean salads a la carte to students during a typical week.

1. 100% fruit juice, fruit, green salad, potatoes (excluding French fries, fried potatoes, or potato chips), carrots, or other vegetables.
2. Green salad, potatoes (excluding French fries, fried potatoes, or potato chips), carrots, or other vegetables.
3. Not including diet soda or diet pop.
4. Doing any kind of physical activity that increased their heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time.
5. Played video or computer games or used a computer for something that was not school work.
6. Enrollment in other courses, participation in school sports, participation in other school activities, participation in community sports activities, high physical fitness competency test score, participation in vocational training, and participation in community service activities.
7. From vending machines or in a school store, canteen, or snack bar.

Where can I get more information? Visit [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth) or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).



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